

James Madison to Edmund Pendleton, January 9, 1781. Transcription: The Writings of James Madison, ed. Gaillard Hunt. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1900-1910.

TO EDMUND PENDLETON.¹

1 From the Madison Papers (1840).

Philadelphia, January 9th, 1781.

Dear Sir, —I have again the pleasure to begin with acknowledging the receipt of a favor from you, that of the first having come to hand yesterday.

On Thursday last, Congress was informed by General Potts and Colonel Johnston, who came expresses for the purpose, that a general mutiny had broken out on the morning of the New Year's day, in the Pennsylvania line, which was cantoned near Morristown, apart from the rest of the army. Every effort was made by the officers to stifle it in its infancy, but without effect. Several of them fell victims to the fury of the mutineers. The next information came from General Wayne, who wrote from Princeton, whither the troops had marched in regular order on their way to Philadelphia, as they gave out, with a determination not to lay down their arms, nor to return to their obedience till a redress of grievances should be obtained. They suffered none of their officers to be among them except General Wayne and Colonels Steuart and Butler, and these they kept under close guard, but in every other respect treated with the utmost decorum. The grievances complained of were principally, the detention of many in service beyond the term of enlistment, and the sufferings of all from a deficient supply of clothing and subsistence,

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and the long arrearage of pay. Several propositions and replies, on the subject of redress, passed between a deputation of sergeants, in behalf of the troops, and General Wayne, but without any certain tendency to a favorable issue. The affair at length began to take a very serious countenance,

and as a great proportion of that line are foreigners, and not a few deserters from the British army, and as they showed a disposition to continue at Princeton, from whence a refuge with the enemy, who, it was said, were coming out in force for the purpose, was at any moment practicable, it was thought necessary, notwithstanding the humiliation of the step, to depute a committee of Congress with powers to employ every expedient for putting a speedy end to the discontents. The President of the State, with a number of gentlemen from this place, went up to interpose their influence. By a letter from the committee, who had proceeded as far as Trenton, received the evening before last, it appears that the President, who was ahead, and had written to General Wayne, was likely to have a confidential reception. The committee write, that an emissary of Clinton, who had appeared among the soldiers with a paper setting forth the folly and danger of adhering to a cause which had already brought so much misery upon them, promising a protection under the British Government, a body of troops to cover their escape, and the payment of all arrears due from Congress, was seized and given up to General Wayne, who handed him with his guide over to the President of this State; who placed them under the custody of his light-horse. This circumstance not only presages a fortunate issue to the mutiny, but is such a proof of attachment to the country in the most trying situation, as must effectually repress the joy and encouragement which the enemy had taken from this threatening event. The late detachment from New York, which a letter from Fredericksburg says is in the Chesapeake, is about one thousand six hundred strong, and commanded by Arnold.